

H. H. RUMBLER



HANS SEBALD BEHAM
(Nürnberg 1500 - 1550)

Nessus and Dejanira.

Engraving 7.2 x 5.2 cm

Bartsch 108 copy (Bartsch confuses original and copy); Pauli and Hollstein 110

Brilliant impression of this extremely rare, erotic composition.

Of the most beautiful clarity and transparency, so that the brilliant softness in the use of the burin specifically emphasized by Pauli achieves a pitch of perfection. With great effectiveness in the use of graphic resources, Dejanira's nude body is subtly modeled through a precisely observed play of light and shadow. The conspicuously pure tone of the paper allows the untreated, brightly illuminated areas of her skin to shine forth in a particularly seductive manner in sharp contrast to the deeply shadowed form of the brutish Nessus.

Cut down to the platemark or with very fine paper margins beyond it. A small, inconspicuous area at the lower left corner has been retouched with a pen – an insignificant detail in view of the superlatives quality and beauty of this impression.

Beham's Nessus and Dejanira represents a radical break with the iconographic tradition based on the story, drawn from Greek mythology, of the violent rape of Hercules's wife by a centaur. While avoiding all illusions to the violent act itself, Beham interprets the encounter between this dissimilar pair as an Arcadian, bucolic love scene in which Nessus has, correctly, been given the form of a satyr, toward whom Dejanira turns lovingly.

Provenance

Provenance: Karl Krauskopf (not in Lugt)